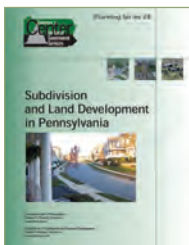


Activity 1: Major Planning Tools

The Municipalities Planning Code provides the state framework for planning for these communities who choose to plan, and even for communities who choose not to plan. The Comprehensive Plan is a guide, not a legal document or an ordinance, that provides a vision and guidelines for future growth and development. The other three tools listed are land use ordinances which are legislative actions of the governing body of the municipality. To enact or amend an ordinance requires the voting procedures of the governing body. The ordinances help implement the comprehensive plan.



The Comprehensive Plan is an official document that guides decisions on land use and development in the community. It is a statement of future goals for the community and provides a formal vision for future growth, natural resources protection, parks, historical resources and transportation systems. It contains a plan for future water supply and determines where growth and development will occur including municipal services, roads, sewer, police, fire protection, schools, parks and open space. It should be updated continually in response to changes. Ordinances should be adopted to support the comprehensive plan.



The Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances regulate the creation of property lines and development on those properties. It is the most common type of ordinance. “Subdivision” refers to the creation of new lots or changes in property lines. “Land development” involves regulations concerning construction. When a developer buys a large farm and creates a new development on it, the community could have regulations in place. The community establishes elements that it requires of a developer. Such elements include lot size, street widths and curves, drainage, water supply, driveways and sidewalks. The regulations could determine that the improvements are paid by the developer, not taxpayers. Communities avoid future complaints about drainage, traffic or lot size.



The Zoning Ordinance is the second most common type of land use ordinance. It is a tool a community may utilize to regulate how land is used in different areas or districts of the community and establishes location for different types of development. The zoning ordinance consists of two parts: a text and a map of the zoning districts. The text contains information on building height, area, setback, density and other standards. The zoning map delineates the boundaries of specific districts or zones. It divides all land within a municipality into zones and creates regulations that apply to specific zones. Zoning should account for all types of land uses and housing types.



The Official Map is a land use ordinance that declares the future public projects and projected areas of a community. It identifies private property where open space is desired or where public improvements are envisioned. It demonstrates the intent of the local government to acquire land for municipal purposes. It identifies future road improvements, wellhead protection areas, parks and future public land. It is the least known tool with less than three dozen municipalities having adopted an official map.